

MINUTES  
**Veneta Economic Development Committee**  
**Wednesday, October 12, 2016 – 2:00 p.m.**  
Veneta Administrative Center, 88184 8th Street, Veneta, Oregon

**Present:** Jason Alansky, Linda Boothe, Len Goodwin (Chair), Dave D’Avanzo, Gina Haley-Morrell, Charles Ruff

**Absent:** Thomas Cotter, Herb Vloedman (Vice Chair), Ryan Frome

**Others:** Ric Ingham, City Administrator; Kay Bork, Community Development Director; Stephen Dobrinich, Program Specialist; Marina Brassfield, Economic Development Specialist; Michael Held, Rural Development Initiatives; Mary Bosch, Rural Development Initiatives

---

**1. Call to Order**

- a. Chair Len Goodwin called the meeting to order at 2:05 p.m.

**2. Public Comment**

- a. No public comment.

**3. Administrative**

- a. Approval of Minutes:  
**Charles Ruff made a motion to approve minutes from August 10, 2016. Linda Boothe seconded the motion which passed with a vote of 5-0.** Jason Alansky arrived after the vote.
- b. Approval of Minutes:  
**Linda Boothe made a motion to approve minutes from September 14, 2016. Dave D’Avanzo seconded the motion which passed with a vote of 5-0.** Jason Alansky arrived after the vote.

**4. Implementation of Action Plan**

- a. Reprioritized Action Plan  
Ric Ingham introduced the reprioritized work plan reviewed by City Staff. Priority items are ones that are gaining momentum. Ingham discussed the top five on the list. The Committee feels the action plan is a valuable tool to mark milestones and keep resources focused where they need to be. Charles Ruff made a motion to approve the reprioritized action plan and Gina Haley-Morrell seconded the motion.
- b. Introduction of the Downtown Retail Market Analysis Project
  - i. Review of “Next Steps Strategy” 2008  
Rural Development Initiatives is assisting the City in a Downtown Retail Market Analysis and helping to create a development strategy for the downtown business district. Kay Bork began the presentation by reviewing the City’s “Next Steps Strategy” adopted in 2008. It is an action plan that is specific in strategies and policies the City should undertake as part of the efforts to implement the Downtown Master Plan, developed a few years earlier through the Oregon Downtown Development Association. The strategies are listed in a table format and the document is a way to track the City’s progress. The retail market analysis is one strategy to find opportunities for economic development in Veneta.

Goodwin notes creating concept designs may be an area the Committee could assist and provide support. Bork explained that part of the work plan with RDI involves identifying key sites and hiring an architect to come up with concept plans, with input from the Committee. Ingham said the original Downtown Master Plan does have some conceptual designs.

Included in the Next Steps Strategy are plans to work on many downtown streets. One area that has yet not been addressed is Territorial Highway. Ingham explained that focus has not been on Territorial because when the transit center was moved from the Luther Lane site to the West Broadway site, there wasn't as immediate of a need to tie in that section of Territorial. In addition, the Territorial area will be very expensive and the City made a tremendous investment in West Broadway. Residents and the community want to see a return on their investment before beginning other projects. Bork noted that perhaps the time to start looking at some streetscape improvements on Territorial is when the corner begins redevelopment.

Goodwin said that as potential developments at the corner occur, the Committee should have some concept of what it wants and should be prepared with a list of improvements to seek. Ingham told the group some conceptual plans for the corner are already complete and they include the same type of lighting fixtures and planters on West Broadway. The challenge is working with ODOT because their right of way at the intersection is very large. Anything that would normally not be there, such as signage, must go through an approval process.

Bork continued to the next strategy which is to work on gateway signage. There has been a lot of discussion with ODOT about what the City can and cannot do in ODOT right of way and what type of signage rights the City has. Plans have not been created yet, but wayfinding and signage is part of Marina Brassfield's work plan for the year.

Goodwin noted as Territorial Highway does develop the Committee may want to advocate for the possibility of a special transportation area designation in the future. Bork explained there are standards cities can put in place to develop highways as a main street. Right now, the City is limited by the freight and mobility standards set by the State. The State's goal is to move traffic through efficiently. If the City had the designation, it can incorporate traffic calming designs, such as bulb outs and plantings. When the City updates its long-term transportation plan, it will work with ODOT and the Committee may have input on improvements to the highway.

ii. Case Study Review

Steve Dobrinich presented case studies on successful downtown redevelopment and urban renewal best practices in communities like Veneta. Dobrinich explained that vibrant downtown districts support local business, and contribute to quality of life by creating a center space and a sense of community around a main street area. The City and the Committee heard in Veneta Business Connect that there is limited retail

space available especially in West Lane Shopping Center. During BR&E interviews, the City learned there is demand for local retail space and interest around the downtown area and that a lot of residents do their shopping in Eugene-Springfield. Population growth over the last several years and future projections show that retail development is not matching residential development.

Dobrinich found case studies on the Association of Oregon Redevelopment Agencies. He reiterated the importance of public-private partnership, and the importance of community identity and placemaking in these case studies. Towns who had catalyst projects and projects that hit multiple goals were common in the case studies. He highlighted the importance of identifying what the regional attractor is and connecting local action with those trends. Through case study review, Dobrinich found that small towns who are proactive, future oriented, and take some risk saw some of the best outcomes. He also found that successful economic development strategies were ones guided by broadly held local visions.

Goodwin posed the question of how to encourage someone to build a hotel and noted Fern Ridge Reservoir as an attractor. Mary Bosch said that lodging feasibility should be looked at as part of the redevelopment plan, and could be used as a next step for the City. Ingham followed up by saying that the City posted a motel Request for Proposals (RFP) on City owned parcels and no one responded. Goodwin said the Committee needs to identify which “building blocks” the community has and use them to attract additional business. The Committee is correctly focusing on retention and expansion, but a critical focus also needs to be attracting new businesses. The established ones would benefit from additional economic activity and may be able to expand with more dollars in the area. Ingham said the Strategic Plan from 2005 had a stronger focus on tourism development than at present. The City worked with the Army Corps of Engineers around the Wings and Wine Festival to improve signage for birdwatching opportunities and to build additional platforms for birdwatching. There may be more activity that can be done with signage, brochures, and ongoing advertising. It is difficult to do more on Reservoir-based campsite information than Lane County Parks already does. Ingham said the City thought the Wineries Without Walls project would attract tourists coming through to look at different wineries but it did not gain the traction needed.

- iii. Bosch began a PowerPoint presentation to explain the downtown retail market analysis process. She noted the core of the work will take place over the next six to seven months and that it includes three phases. RDI and the City have launched Phase I, the opportunity analysis phase. Phase II is developing a marketing strategy. Finally, in Phase III RDI will use market data and reflections from the market place in its analysis to focus on a site for redevelopment.
- iv. Bosch explained Phase I, which will identify market tested business opportunities, as well as niches and gaps in the market. The City can then

connect possibilities in the marketplace through conversations with entrepreneurs, investors, existing businesses, and brokers. Key questions that will be answered in the market study include what are the perceptions of Veneta and how does the town compare to other satellite cities in the Eugene-area market. RDI and the City are already speaking with the brokerage community. RDI will look at the supply and demand balance to identify what the gap is and what types of businesses, services, and merchandise can realistically be captured in Veneta. RDI will look community wide but the focus is downtown. The City will then use the information gathered to tell a positive story about the potential here.

Bosch said the first step is looking at the market area. Interviews with key retail anchors will help discern where customers are coming from, what are they coming for, and which products they are missing. RDI will examine leakage to help understand what types of retail will be successful in Veneta.

Phase II follows the market study. RDI and the City will look carefully at downtown properties that are most ready for development or redevelopment. Conversations with property owners and inventory of what is on the site will occur. At that point, there may be a need for additional concept plans and data on how a site could be developed, as to put information in front of brokers and potential developers.

Phase III of the initiative is packaging the information and putting together a marketing plan to ensure the data, results, and recommendations get put in front of the right people in a succinct and understandable way. The hope is to depict what is found in the market study in a way that will point investors to opportunities and give them the specifics they need to make a good decision. Bosch thinks this stage is where the Committee could be very engaged and disseminate information using the contacts Committee members already have. The marketing plan will focus on key opportunities, key sites, how to help existing businesses, and how to attract new businesses. From there, RDI will come up with short term initiatives and actions.

Goodwin said the community will never have a Costco, but that many residents shop there regularly. Bosch said RDI will look at trends and what other small towns have done downtown, but most common successes are experiential retail, entertainment, and restaurants. It is community based, social locations and endeavors that cannot be found in big box retail or chain stores.

Michael Held noted that he and Brassfield were in an interview earlier and he asked what type of complementary businesses the manager would like to see in town. The response was specialty, niche businesses. It does not make sense to have a big box store, however, experiential businesses become a draw in a community. The business who was interviewed is not a niche retailer, and said that even a shop that may be a slight competitor would help him in the long term, because success comes from as much

foot traffic as possible.

Bork responded that in a broker interview she was told Veneta needs to focus on its strengths, such as wine and agriculture, and build retail around those strengths. Bork said focus needs to be on retail in Veneta that people cannot find elsewhere. Goodwin noted shopping local and supporting one's own community is an important social aspect the Committee can focus on and help improve.

Dave D'Avanzo said if there were a bigger restaurant base, providing community members with several options for dinner and a movie or show, more people would stay in town and shop on weekend evenings. He points out that those are the types of businesses that will complement one another. Goodwin shared an example from Cottage Grove. The Cottage Theater is full every performance, and he estimated that 90% of people either go out for dinner before or go out afterward.

## **5. Program/Project Updates**

### **a. Community Broadband Demand Survey**

Ingham told the group that Dobrinich drafted a survey which has been sent to Lane Council of Governments (LCOG). The goal is to gauge the demand for a new broadband project. LCOG has a contract with a company called Mindmixer which allows people to go online, complete a survey, and then tabulates the data. Outreach in November will include the utility bill, the City newsletter, Facebook, and the Committee's newsletter. Ingham encouraged everyone to take the survey and tell community members to do so as well.

## **6. Subcommittee Updates**

### **a. Meeting Summaries**

#### **i. Business Connect**

Brassfield said the subcommittee had two meetings and narrowed its focus on two projects. The group would like to hold an event in the spring like the Taste of Creswell, which is a fun community event where local vendors and businesses convene to network, share their products and services, and enjoy music and food.

Brassfield explained the second project the group is working on, which is a small business assistance center housed in the Veneta/Fern Ridge Chamber of Commerce. The Chamber is leading that project since they are the subcommittee sponsor. Business assistance resources such as brochures and business cards will be in the center, and at some point, the Chamber would like to have computers and other office equipment available to members of the Chamber to use. The next meeting is scheduled for November 8<sup>th</sup>.

#### **ii. Workforce Development**

Dobrinich said the first meeting was on October 6<sup>th</sup> and the group will meet again on October 20<sup>th</sup>. The group started by discussing challenges businesses face in hiring new employees. Dobrinich and Brassfield are

conducting case study research on workforce development best practices in other small communities.

iii. **Business Infrastructure**

Ingham said the subcommittee is composed of Economic Development Committee members and City Staff. Top initiatives are broadband survey work and then a community broadband project. The second is the downtown retail market analysis. The third priority is defining the availability of retail space in Veneta.

**7. Other**

a. **November Newsletter**

Brassfield handed out copies of a rough draft November newsletter for feedback. Brassfield is waiting picture and profile blurb from Alansky.

b. **Ford Foundation Community Vitality Newsletter**

Brassfield encouraged members to subscribe to the newsletter, as it has interesting articles on rural economic development. Ingham shared that the Foundation has many resources, including a library of books and materials available. If someone wants to read one, they can request it to be sent to their home. There is a link in the agenda packet to subscribe.

c. **Other**

Goodwin asked Ingham if there were updates on the report of transportation issues. Ingham responded that the Legislative Transportation Committee had their last meeting in Albany the previous week. The Transportation Committee stopped at sites across the state with the intent of developing a 2017 transportation package. One side of the committee is not optimistic for the outcome, as there are external factors pushing the committee in different directions. The City has heard that the Transportation Committee wants cities, counties, and economic development groups to tell legislators there is support for an increase of fees. If the State wants to invest millions of dollars in new transportation funding, the money must come from somewhere and it will likely come from gas taxes, vehicle registration fees, or a mix. Three of the cities in Lane County are increasing their gas tax to make vital street improvements. Veneta has incorporated the transportation utility fee to continue investing in the transportation system and street system. City councilors are interested in seeing what happens with gas increases in three cities. If all of them pass, Ingham noted four cities would have a six-cent tax, Eugene will have a five-cent tax, and Veneta and a few others will have a three-cent tax. If there is success in other cities, the Councilors would likely want to increase Veneta's tax to five cents or six cents.

**8. Next Meeting**

- a. November 9<sup>th</sup> at 2:00 p.m. and the second Wednesday of every month.

**9. Adjourn**

- a. Chair Len Goodwin adjourned the meeting at 3:20 p.m.